



Forest Land Enhancement Program Briefing Paper

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FLEP Overview

FLEP Funds Have Been Depleted.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized the Forest Service to launch a forestry program to assist nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) landowners in what is known as the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). The program allocated \$20 million in its inaugural year, fiscal year (FY) 2003 through State forestry agencies.

Due to the extreme fire season of 2003, \$50 million of the FLEP funds were transferred to the Forest Service for fire suppression costs. In the 2004 Interior Appropriations budget, \$40 million was not repaid. In the 2005 President's budget, the remaining \$40 million is being cancelled. The 2002 Farm Bill made \$100 million available for program years 2002-2007. This leaves FLEP with no funds for future years. Any FLEP funds remaining in the States may be spent in accordance with Federal and State program direction. Below is a basic description of this program.

Through FLEP, State forestry agencies and their partners can provide a wide array of educational, technical and financial services with the remaining funds, that are intended to ensure that the nation's NIPF and related resources continue to provide sustainable forest products and safeguard the health of our water, air, and wildlife.

FLEP is a voluntary program in each State and participation by landowners is voluntary. In each State participating in the program, the State Forester and State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee have jointly developed a State Priority Plan that is intended to promote forest management objectives and describe FLEP. The State Priority Plan will determine the mix of educational, technical and financial assistance with States choosing one or more of these elements. As applicable, it will identify educational activities and their outcome, describe the technical assistance to be provided and its outcomes, and describe the cost-share components that will be available to NIPF landowners and the public values of these practices.

The Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) and the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) were repealed in the 2002 Farm Bill. FLEP was designed to provide States with the opportunity to continue the efforts they had going with SIP and FIP. State forestry agencies can use FLEP funds to provide assistance to NIPF owners to achieve a broad array of natural resource objectives. The Forest Service and State forestry agencies are guided by the following principles:

- Establish, manage, maintain, protect, enhance, and restore NIPF lands.
- Enhance the productivity of timber, habitat for flora and fauna, soil, water, air quality, wetlands, and riparian buffers of these lands.

- Assist owners and managers to more actively manage NIPF lands to enhance and sustain the long-term productivity of timber and non-timber forest resources.
- Reduce the risk and help restore, recover and mitigate the damage to forests caused by fire, insects, invasive species, disease, and damaging weather.
- Increase and enhance carbon sequestration opportunities.
- Enhance implementation of agroforestry practices.
- Encourage and leverage State, Federal, and local resource management expertise, financial assistance and educational programs that support FLEP.

NIPF owners who wish to participate in the cost-share component of FLEP in those States offering it as an option must complete one or more of the sustainable forestry practices available in their State as described in a forest management plan.

In each State, the State forester or a representative will evaluate the management plans submitted by NIPF owners and approve them for participation in FLEP. Eligibility criteria for FLEP are broader than for SIP and FIP to encourage greater participation.

FLEP allows treatment of up to 1,000 acres per year and variances of up to 5,000 acres if significant public benefits will accrue. The maximum FLEP cost-share payment for any practice may be up to 75 percent. The aggregate payment to any one landowner through 2007 may not exceed \$100,000, except in Alaska. The variances for Alaska are described in their State Priority Plan.

States will be responsible for reporting program accomplishments for all the program components - educational, technical, financial, – that is being implementing. States will also account for administrative dollars used to implement FLEP.

Program implementation began after the interim rule was published in the Federal Register on June 9, 2003. FY 2003 funds were sent to the Forest Service field units on July 3, 2003.

Fiscal year 2002 appropriations in SIP and FIP are in the process of being obligated by the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



FLEP